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ABSTRACT

Thirty learning disabled (LD) students enrolled in secondary regular classes, 30 LD Ss in vocational training classes, and 30 LD Ss integrated in regular secondary classes and receiving additional assistance in learning resource centers were compared on measures of self concept and career attitudes. Results from the Attitude Scale of the Career Maturity Index and the Illinois Index of Self Derogation were analyzed, and significant differences were found among the means of the self concept and career attitude scores of the three groups. Self concepts of LD Ss in vocational training and learning resource centers were lower than that of regular class Ss. The learning resource group demonstrated lower career attitude scores than the vocational training and regular class Ss. Findings supported vocational training classes as the most efficacious in shaping career attitudes of LD adolescents. (CL)

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The Learning Disabled Adolescent: An Overview of Affective Education and Career Development Practices

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The education of the adolescent learning disabled has recently become one of the most pressing concerns in the field of learning disabilities (Goodman, 1978; Mann, Goodman, & Wiederholt, 1978; Wiig & Semel, 1976). Two facts help to explain why this is so. First, it has become painfully apparent that many pupils who were diagnosed in elementary school as learning disabled, have not responded adequately to the training and remedial efforts provided them during their earlier grades. Second, recent Federal Legislation (PL 94-142, 1975) and state Due Process regulations mandate that services be provided for these students (Abeson, Bolick, & Hass, 1975; Ballard & Zellel, 1977; Hayes & Higgins, 1978; Hudson & Graham, 1978; Zigmond, 1978).

With the enactment of Public Law 94-142, career education for learning disabled students has received serious consideration throughout the profession. Learning disabled students have traditionally been excluded from such programs because guidelines generally restrict participation to only the most severely handicapped. Also, limited attempts have been made in this direction because of the emphasis on

remediation of basic skills of younger children. Consequently, the secondary school has been under attack from various directions for several years (Marsh, Gearheart & Gearheart, 1978).

Educators now have the benefit of critiques of secondary school programming and know their shortcomings (Cruickshank, 1977; Deshler, 1978; Larsen, 1978; McNutt & Keller, 1978), many of which must be avoided in structuring career designs for learning disabled students. It is important, therefore, as new programs are developed and before implementation becomes finalized, that a variety of affective education practices be examined. Specifically, this study investigated the extent to which three groups of learning disabled students differed on self-concept and career attitudes. The null hypotheses of no difference was formulated.

Overview

Affective education has received considerable coverage in the literature (Aspy, 1977; Calhoun & Elliott, 1977; Gordon, 1973; Hamachek, 1973; Kelley, 1973; Lickona, 1977). Stermer & Katzenmeyer (1976) & Yagel (1975) have suggested that affective education should be a primary goal of general public education.

Special educators have also expressed a need for their students to receive training in the affective domain (Yagel, 1975). Social and emotional behavior is considered to be an

essential educational parameter for most handicapped students (Hewett & Forness, 1974). Special educators, therefore, have an especially critical role to play in the affective education field, an area considered to be an integral part of career education (Brolin & D'Alonzo, 1979; Harmin, 1977). To insure maximum program effectiveness, methods of implementing needed affective education services should occur in regular and special education programs (Kelly, Bullock, & Dykes, 1977).

Career education is a means of changing the curriculum, improving the schools, and improving the lives of students who may more meaningfully relate themselves to the world. A career is the culmination or tatality of work that is accomplished in a lifetime (Brolin, 1977; Gysbers & Moore, 1975; Hansen, 1977; Miller, 1973). Career education includes the basic tool subjects of the curriculum, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Also affective education variables, including attitudes, self-concept, and social values which are essential characteristics of a good employee.

Despite the degree of interest and the funds available from federal and state sources, the major strength of the career education movement is the power of the concept. Its greatest assests are the fresh hope it can bring for curriculum improvement, and the new approaches it can provide for

revitalization of the instructional program. Career education is really a reorientation of most of education toward the relevant and real world of work and the economic sector of our society and culture.

Career attitudes refer to the affective rather than intellectual reactions of individuals toward career choice. Incorporated in the concept are the person's feelings related to involvement in the career choice process, orientation toward work, independence in decision making, preference for career choice factors, and conceptions of the career choice process.

Critique of Research Studies

Current conceptualizations of career education for exceptional children emphasize affective experiences and activities in regard to occupational choice, as well as preparation in specific job related skills (Bingham, 1978). Although several studies have focused on career education for exceptional children, few have questioned whether adolescents with learning disabilities have incorporated attitudes about themselves that are reflective of their eventual work behaviors. Of those that have been reported (D'Alonzo & Miller, 1977; Lerner, Evans & Meyers, 1977; Levy, 1973; Marland, Lichtenwald & Burke, 1975; Wallace & Larsen, 1978) conclude that instructional approaches to the learning disabled adolescent

must emphasize relevancy of emotional, social, educational, and career education components. Without such recognition on the part of the teacher, the program will encounter major difficulties.

According to Hoyt (1975) relationships between education and work are increasing. The American system of formal education must accept increasing responsibility both for providing individuals with general career skills required for adaptability in our rapidly changing society and with specific career skills that can be utilized in making the transition from school to the world of paid employment.

A number of investigators (e.g., Brown, 1977; Kronicke, 1978; Leviton & Kiraly, 1975) Peterson & Park, 1975) have reported that modification in instructional offerings can bring about improvement in affective measures of learning disabled adolescents. These program alterations seem crucial in that many such students simply give up, overcome by eroded self-confidence and feelings of inferiority. In contrast, Costa (1977) suggests that while certain affective attributes are fairly constant and measurable, they are found to be largely influenced by the degree of love, acceptance, and trust received from parents. It is doubtful, therefore, if these measures respond to the effect of educational practices in attempting to alter a person's self-esteem or attitudes over a limited time period.

Inservice Training

Public Law 94-142 requires that first-priority children be provided at least interim educational services before teacher inservice begins. On the part of teachers it is felt that inservice training must occur prior to the placement of handicapped children. One of our priorities is to insure that the comprehensive system of staff development mandated by PL 94-142 be implemented (Ryor, 1978). This being closely monitored on both local and state levels. The use of affective educational techniques in inservice training of special educators is only briefly mentioned in the literature (Gerber & Dreyek, 1977) and deserves more attention. The long-range effects of such programs are also amenable to further investigation.

Career education is a national priority, yet we do not have the time or needed resources to do all of the formal inservice education work with qualified outside consultants in schools across the nation that needs to be done (Borman, 1977). If career education is going to be a vehicle for educational reform, it is going to happen through the cooperative effort of personnel within local school districts (Borman & Stenning, 1974). A variety of career education curriculum guides and instructional materials have been developed along with implementation strategies, however, these developed

materials have not reached the majority of school districts. Research has indicated that the majority of teachers, counselors and administrators are supportive of the career education movement, but their interest and support for the movement is going to subside if they do not receive immediate assistance in planning career education programs. Accordingly, it is essential that training programs in career education involve large numbers of district personnel and provide planning and implementation strategies.

Method

Subjects

Ninety subjects were chosen from five high schools in the inner city of a large metropolitan area. The test subjects were randomly selected so that a cross section of male-female, and black-white were represented.

The three groups included: (a) 30 LD students enrolled in secondary regular classes, (b) 30 LD students in secondary vocational training classes, and (c) 30 LD students integrated in the regular secondary classes and receiving additional support beyond that ordinarily provided in regular classes through Learning Resource Centers. The subjects were assigned to the identified setting for a period of at least two years for inclusion in this study. Additional subject characteristics are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Chronological Age (CA)[a] and IQ[b] for the Three Groups

Group	CA[a]		IQ[b]	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Regular	184.25	3.89	88.4	3.68
Vocational	192.86	5.24	91.2	3.84
Resource Centers	189.24	4.66	87.5	4.45

[a]In Months.

[b]Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised.

Learning Resource Center

The reintegrated subjects were exposed to treatment through learning resource centers, which have become a popular model in recent years (Hammill & Wiederholt, 1972; McLoughlin & Kass, 1978; Sabatino, 1972). However, some flaws have been reported in the conceptualization of services offered to LD students through this design (Cruickshank, 1977; Burgett & Dodge, 1976; Harris & Mahar, 1975). The center consisted of a double or triple-sized classroom staffed by teachers experienced in diagnostic and prescriptive techniques, and support personnel. Approximately 20 students were accommodated at any given time. Each session of 20 students contained approximately one-third who had been former special-class students. The remainder were regular-class students referred by their classroom teachers because they needed special educational assistance, either remedial or enrichment. Subjects attended the learning resource center approximately 40 minutes per day, 5 days a week, although some students spent larger portions of each day there depending on their educational needs.

The learning resource center was organized as a series of activity stations, with each sector devoted to modifying the tool skills. A variety of technological equipment was provided for this purpose. The teachers provided the learning

disabled students with emotional support, encouragement, and counseling to aid them in coping with some of the problems they encountered in the regular classes. As the full implications of PL 94-142 become more visible, it will be of even greater interest to special educators, and other professionals to examine the evolving program of learning resource centers (Ashcroft, 1977; Bland, 1976; Grill, 1978; Summers, 1977).

Procedure

The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) was used to determine the intellectual classification range for participants in this sample.

The attitude Scale of the Career Maturity Index (Crites, 1973) was used to determine career attitudes. The inventory evaluates the maturity of student's attitudes and competencies, which are necessary for making a sound career decision. The inventory also assesses a student's needs for counseling and the effectiveness of career education and counseling programs.

The Illinois Index of Self-Derogation (IISD) (Meyerowitz, 1962) was used to measure the self-concept of the sample. The index consists of 30 items, each item consisting of two sentences. One sentence describes a child with a socially undesirable ascription, such as: "Some children do not like the child with the balloon." The second sentence describes a child with neutral or socially desirable ascription, e.g.,

"Many children like the child with the flag." The child listens to the descriptions of the two children and then marks in a designated area of his score sheet the child which he regards as "most" like himself.

For this study, the IISD type format was retained, however, a modification was made. Rather than requiring the respondent to identify his answer on the score sheet according to the stick figures called for in the original instrument, the subject was asked to place an x beneath his answer choice. Items were scored in the direction of positive self-concept, with 100 being the top score.

The IISD was administered in groups of five to seven children at a time. Prior to the administration of the instrument, rapport was established with each group of children by discussing the general concept of the test. Each child was told to think in terms of "which child he liked best." Instructions for marking responses were given. For clarity, the examiner read each item aloud repeating items when necessary, before subjects were allowed to mark their reponses. Attitude and (IISD) testing was begun and completed during the spring 1978.

Results

The data were analyzed using one-way analyses of variance. Significant differences were found among the means of the

self-concept and career attitude scores of the three groups ($F = 5.74$, 2/87 df, $p < .05$, and $F = 3.86$, 2/87 df, $p < .05$, respectively). Additional analyses of these findings were performed for all pairwise combinations of the means: (a) secondary regular LD groups vs. vocational training LD group; (b) vocational training LD group vs. Learning resource group; and (c) secondary regular LD group vs. learning resource group. The means and standard deviations (SDs) for self-concept and career attitude for the three groups appear in Table 2.

The self-concept results for the regular vs. vocational training LD contrast indicated a significant difference ($t = 2.54$, $p < .05$). The comparisons of the vocational vs. learning resource group, and regular vs. learning resource group means were not significantly different ($t = 1.34$, $p < .05$, and $t = 1.52$, $p < .05$ respectively). Analyses of the career attitude scores for the three groups revealed a significant difference between the regular vs. vocational training, and vocational training vs. learning resource group means ($t = 2.60$, $p < .05$, and $t = 2.38$, $p < .05$ respectively). No significant difference was revealed between the regular vs. learning resource group ($t = .31$, $p < .05$).

The first hypothesis, there is no difference in self-concept between the three groups was rejected

TABLE 2

Self-Concept and Career Attitude Variables

for the Three Groups

Group	Self-Concept[a]		Career Attitude[b]	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Regular	95.3	4.18	33.17	5.16
Vocational	93.25	4.40	35.23	4.23
Resource Centers	92.5	5.54	31.44	5.09

[a]Illinois Index of Self Derogation.

[b]Career Maturity Index.

($F = 5.74$, 2/87 df, $p < .05$). Further analysis of this finding revealed a significant difference between the regular vs. vocational training class subjects ($t = 2.54$, $p < .05$).

The second hypothesis, there is no difference in career attitude between the three groups was rejected ($F = 3.86$, 2/87 df, $p < .05$). A check was made in reference to the distribution of the number of derogations made by each group. The regular group had a mean number of derogations of 5:16; for vocational classes 6:12; and for learning resource center students was 6.84. A small derogation mean suggests a positive self-concept.

Discussion

The results of this investigation have shown that self-concepts of learning disabled adolescents in vocational training and learning resource centers were lower than that of regular class subjects. This finding can be interpreted as supporting the positions of (D'Alonzo & Miller, 1977; Lerner, Evans & Meyers, 1977; Levy, 1973 Marland, Lichtenwald & Burke, 1975; Wallace & Larsen, 1978) that instructional approaches to the learning disabled adolescent must emphasize relevancy of emotional, educational, and career education components. An additional finding in the present study was that self-concepts for the vocational training classes did not differ significantly from the learning resource group.

Investigation has shown no significant career attitude difference between the regular and learning resource groups, however, a small mean difference is obvious. The learning resource group demonstrated lower career attitude scores than the vocational training and regular class subjects. This was so even with additional treatment for their disabilities in learning resource centers. This finding is supportive of reports of (Cruickshank, 1977; Burgett & Dodge, 1976; Harris & Mahar, 1975) that our efforts to offer services to LD students through the resource center model indicate a need for study.

A significant career attitude difference was revealed between the regular and vocational training, and vocational training and learning resource groups. This finding can be interpreted as supporting the position of Costa (1977), suggesting that it is doubtful that affective attributes respond to the effect of educational practices in attempting to alter a person's self-esteem or attitudes over a limited time period.

Career education for the learning disabled adolescent is a critical issue for professionals and parents. Accordingly, it seems appropriate to review several of the obstacles concerning this trend. First, the movement toward career education of the learning disabled adolescent will fail if affective

education of these students is not made a focus of concern. Second, there must be cooperative career and affective education planning between learning disabilities and regular classroom teachers. Third, it is unfortunate that research is so limited in this important area of concern. Accordingly, it is important that meaningful steps be taken in this direction in order that learning disabled adolescents be provided the assistance necessary to make important decisions about career choices.

This study has given support to vocational training classes as being the most efficacious in career attitudes of learning disabled adolescents. However, additional research is needed for a number of unanswered questions before definite conclusions can be obtained. Although it is difficult to substantiate which specific instructional design offers more promise, it is likely that orientation toward work and conceptions of the career choice process may show some influence.

In conclusion, it has been shown that significant differences in self-concept and career attitudes of learning disabled adolescents exist in secondary regular classes, vocational training and learning resource centers. Although attempts have been made to provide career education for learning disabled adolescents, there appears to be much needed revision of these efforts. Providing for affective

and career education of learning disabled adolescents might result in more productivity in career related activities.

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